

Wednesday, March 2, 2005

Flu season yet to peak; doctors help track virus

The high fever, headaches, and cough are still around as the flu season has yet to hit its peak in Indiana.

"The influenza (flu) season started much later this season," said Shawn Richards, Indiana State Department of Health respiratory epidemiologist. "Because we have not hit our peak, we anticipate several more weeks of flu illness."

Richards explained that typically the first positive influenza case is reported at the end of November or early December with the peak occurring at the end of January or early February. This year, the first positive case was reported in mid-January.

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Photo by Dan Axler

Members of the Epidemiology Resource Center recently put together viral care packages that will be sent to physicians participating in the influenza surveillance system. The packages, containing such items as bottled water, saline nasal spray and chicken soup, are intended to educate patients about viruses. Shown here are (left to right): Dee Dee McClain, Rose Miller, Trish Manuel, Shawn Richards, Lee Bray, Nina Smith and Mike Wilkinson.

WIC, MCH sponsor breastfeeding training

Last week nearly 150 individuals participated in a Lactation Management Course co-sponsored by the Indiana State Department of Health's Women, Infants and Children's program (WIC) and the Maternal and Child Health's community nutrition program.

The five-day course in Indianapolis drew statewide WIC and non-WIC agencies, and provided them with comprehensive breastfeeding training, according to Sharon Farrell, R.D., WIC, who organized the conference and is an international board certified lactation consultant. The training was provided



Photo by Dan Axler

Lactation experts helping with the WIC, MCH breastfeeding training included (left to right): Kinga Szucs, M.D.; Jan Barger, R.N., IBCLC; Sharon Farrell, IBCLC; Carole Peterson, IBCLC; and Linda Kutner, R.N.

by international board certified lactation consultants Jan Barger, R.N. from Wheaton, Illinois; Linda Kutner, R.N., from Mooresville, North Carolina; and Carole Peterson, from Ft. Wayne.

Among the topics included were normal breastfeeding techniques, problem solving techniques, ways to help mothers and babies begin breastfeeding, breastfeeding accessories and aids, working and breastfeeding, the benefits of breastfeeding, medication and drugs and breastfeeding, and current research pertaining to lactation and infant feeding.

"This training was a great opportunity for outreach, and to have a single message about breastfeeding," said Farrell.

ISDH staffers attend preparedness conference

A team from the Indiana State Department of Health attended a major public health preparedness conference recently in Atlanta, Georgia.

The theme of the conference, which was sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was "Building State and Local Preparedness: A Strong Foundation for National Response."

The event was designed to provide a forum for public health leaders and technical experts to learn how to better prepare for and respond to possible acts of bioterrorism, emerging infections, and other public health emergencies.

The conference was divided into two parts. The first half-day featured discussions about the future

"The focus was not on assessments and planning, but rather on the practical ways that we implement our plans, and the many issues that arise when we do so."

*--Michael Hurst
Public Health and Preparedness and
Emergency Response director*

of CDC's bioterrorism preparedness grant to state, local and territorial health departments.

The rest of the conference featured sessions on a variety of topics including:

- ♦ The Status of Preparedness
- ♦ Preparedness Planning and Readiness Assessment
- ♦ Performance Goals
- ♦ Exercise Development and Evaluation
- ♦ Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance
- ♦ Strategic National Stockpile
- ♦ Surveillance and Epidemiology Capacity
- ♦ Chemical and Biological Laboratories
- ♦ Health Information Dissemination and Emergency Communication
- ♦ Education and Training

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Virtual library offers wealth of health information

The Office of Policy and the Grants Resource Center is making it easier for Indiana State Department of Health staff and the public to access online public health information.

The virtual library, part of the health resource library that is currently in development, will make users aware of health resources available to them, as well as develop a medium that encourages research and learning, according to Mitchell Klopfenstein, virtual librarian.

"The virtual library is maintained in two forms," said Klopfenstein. "It is aimed at ISDH employees through the agency Intranet, and to the general public through the ISDH Web site."

Included are topics such as bioterrorism and emergency prepared-

ness, grant resources and writing tools, research databases and libraries, and links to government agencies.

"The research tools page is provided to give students or professional access to valuable health information through various databases and search engines," said Klopfenstein.

Two of those research tools include INSPIRE and PUBMED databases.


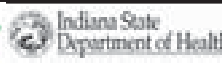
According to Klopfenstein, INSPIRE is a collection of free, searchable databases that provides access to thousands of journals and articles. It is a service of the Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority funded by the Indiana General Assembly and the federal Library Services Technology Act grant from the Indiana State

Library.

"PUBMED is a service of the National Library of Medicine and includes more than 15 million citations for bio-medical articles dating back to the 1950s," said Klopfenstein.

Articles from life science journals, such as Medline, are also included.

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The Indiana State Department of Health *Express* is a biweekly publication for ISDH employees and stakeholders. Words in blue are links that you can access directly if you read the *Express* online. To submit news items, call (317) 234-2817 or send information to: ISDH *Express*, Office of Public Affairs, 2 N. Meridian St., Section 6G, Indianapolis, IN 46204-3003. Inquiries should be directed to:

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Conference

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the practical ways that we implement our plans and the many issues that arise when we do so," said Public Health Preparedness and Emergency Response Director Michael Hurst.

"Every state and local public health agency has products, templates, forms, exercise scenarios, and 'lessons learned'

reports that we are now able to share with one another to model our own next steps or revise our own products and response activities," said Hurst. "This conference has provided us with those opportunities, and what we learn and take from each other will help us perfect what we have built and will continue to build for every community in Indiana." *Andy Zirkle*

A Valentine's Day surprise



Photo by Dan Axler

The ISDH Employee Incentive Committee (EIC) surprised staff with hot chocolate on Valentine's Day. South Bend Chocolate Company's Travis Hollans greets Nancy Smith, Finance, with her cup. Here are some of the comments that the EIC received:

To everyone on the EIC - you guys are awesome! Thanks so much for the hot chocolate and for all of the many ways you find to make us feel special. Thank you!!!

--Kristy Holzhausen, Epidemiology Resource Center

To you and to all of the members of the Incentive Committee I would like to thank you. It means much to the employees to have appreciation shown in such a way for all that they do. Keep up the wonderful and kind ideas that all of you come up with to show this appreciation.

--Clarella Daniels, Administrative Services

Thank you so much! It helped make my Valentine's Day nice.

--Jackie Mitchell, Acute Care

Race for the Cure® team forming

Think pink and join fellow Indiana State Department of Health employees in the fight against breast cancer.

Team ISDH will unite with an estimated 36,000 people in this year's Komen Indianapolis Race for the Cure ® on April 16.

"There is no greater feeling than walking in a crowd of 36,000 people all there for the same reason," said ISDH Team Leader Carol Case, Breast and Cervical Cancer Program. "As one of my co-workers said, we get to know co-workers outside the work environment and be a part of something significant."

Participants can select from various race levels (for complete descriptions, visit www.komenindy.org).

"Seventy-five percent of the money raised stays in Central Indiana," said Case. "It used for screenings, treatments, follow-up care, research, and to raise awareness of breast cancer."

To register as part of the ISDH team, to make a monetary donation, or for more information, please contact your floor captain (those on a floor without a captain should contact any floor captain).

The deadline for registering as part of the ISDH team is March 16.

Team participants will be honored at a breakfast on Thursday, April 14.

Floor captains include:

- ♦All Selig floors: Elizabeth Hibler and Antoniette Holt
- ♦Second floor: JoeAnn Gupton and Barbara Gann
- ♦Third floor: Tanya Parrish
- ♦Fifth floor: Keisha Banks
- ♦Sixth floor: Janice Addington, Carol Case, and Kennetha Tooley
- ♦Seventh floor: Shelley Boltinghouse



Flu

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With flu shot restrictions lifted in January, and the vaccine in good supply, Richards is encouraging those that are not vaccinated to get a shot while the influenza virus is circulating.

Because the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not require states to report influenza cases, the ISDH does not keep a tally of how many people have the flu. However, Richards said a number of physicians throughout the state voluntarily participate in a surveillance system to track flu activity.

Currently 31 physicians statewide are participating in the program in which they track the number of patients seen in a week and how many of them have influenza-like illness, based on specific age group.

The physicians also submit specimens to the ISDH lab to confirm influenza. The results are tracked by the ISDH as well as the CDC.

"By submitting the specimens, we are able to know what strain of the illness is circulating in that specific area," explained Richards of the importance of the testing and patient tracking.

This in turn helps Richards and the CDC track influenza and prepare for the next season.

The flu or a cold?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the flu and common cold are both respiratory illnesses that are caused by different viruses and have similar symptoms. The flu is generally worse and the symptoms of fever, body aches, extreme tiredness and dry cough are more intense. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose with symptoms that are milder than the flu.

-Source: CDC Web site

"Scientists make an educated guess on what strain of the virus will be circulating next year based on the previous years data, viral strains that emerge late in the typical flu season, viral strains circu-

lating in Southeast Asia, and strains of flu that seem to adversely affect the health of people the most," said Richards.

As a way to thank participating physicians, Richards is using grant money to put together viral care packages that they can give patients. "Without the help of the participating physicians we would not have such a strong surveillance system," said Richards.

The viral care package initiative is an attempt to educate patients about the nature of viruses, said Richards. "Hopefully, patients will more clearly understand why a physician did not prescribe an antibiotic for their viral illness and provide ways to protect themselves against many viral illnesses, such as flu," she explained.

Care package contents include educational materials, a thermometer, bottled water, soap, alcohol gel, tissues, throat lozenges, saline nasal spray, a self monitoring temperature log, and chicken soup.

"The entire Epidemiology Resource Center has worked extremely hard to put these packages together," said Richards. "I want to especially thank Trish Manuel,

Library

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A grants resource center is also under development to provide assistance to local organizations or individuals interested in pursuing state and federal funds.

ISDH employees also have access to a Lifelong Learning section of the virtual library.

"The Lifelong Learning section provides reading material on traditional and nontraditional health topics," said Klopfenstein. "Some of the nontraditional topics include

excerpts from 'Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness,' from the President's Council on Bioethics."

Virtual library visitors can also view Nobel Prize lectures from laureates such as Toni Morrison, the Dalai Lama, and Mother Teresa. The virtual library will also work in conjunction with the ISDH Learning Management System (LMS) to provide relevant educational resources.

"The purpose of the virtual

library is to provide access to information," said Klopfenstein. "It's a significant resource. It is valuable to the epidemiologist researching a disease through PUBMED. It is valuable to the grant writer in need of a reference, and it is valuable to citizens and employees seeking to learn more about public health or simply explore different perspectives."

For more information, contact Klopfenstein through GroupWise.